

ON LINE

DAN GUTMAN

'Guardians' turns back clock in attempt to save



What if you could go back in time and witness the events leading up to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy?

That's the subject of a fascinating computer game, "Guardians of Infinity: To Save Kennedy" (Paragon Software, 412-838-1166).

The game (for IBM, \$45) begins in the year 2087, when the "time continuum" is spinning out of control. The whole mess began, according to physicist Adam Cooper, the day Kennedy was assassinated.

As a "temporal physicist," your mission is to travel back to Friday, Nov. 15, 1963, and do nothing short of altering the course of history. You have one week to stop the murder.

It's not so easy. A stranger can't just walk up to the president of the United States — especially a stranger who claims he comes from the future.

The path to success in the game is to send your five agents (the "guardians of infinity") to meet and "talk" with people who influence the life of the president. The characters of LBJ, Jackie, Bobby Kennedy, J. Edgar Hoover, Peter Lawford, Lee Harvey Oswald and 120 others are depicted in the game.

If your agents aren't arrested, kidnapped or killed along the way, you'll get to meet with President Kennedy himself. You have just 15 minutes to convince the president in a dramatic face-to-face meeting that you are from a distant century and that he should cancel his trip to Dallas.

F.J. Lennon, one of the designers of "Guardians of Infinity," was born the same year Kennedy was shot.

"We thought it would make an interesting game to combine fiction with an actual historical event," he said. "We wanted to combine a 'Mission Impossible'-type theme with a big event."

To do it right, Lennon and his team of game designers spent a year combing the Library of Congress, the National Archives and the JFK Library in Boston for everything about Kennedy and the assassination they could get their hands on.

The painstaking research that has gone into the project shows. While you fight to change history, you hardly notice that you're getting a pretty good history lesson, too.

But, recently, dramatization in television news stories has become a controversial subject. With "Guardians of Infinity," we're now getting dramatization in computer software. Is "documentary" a dangerous distortion of real events?

It's doubtful that anyone would take a fantasy like "Guardians of Infinity" seriously as historical fact. But, the potential for problems is there. There is nothing to stop a software publisher from releasing a program about American history, for instance, that is biased in favor of the company's political philosophy.

Time travel is a subject that continues to captivate us. And, the idea of going back to try to prevent the most memorable tragedy of our time is irresistible. "Guardians of Infinity" is a fascinating blend of fact and fiction.

You never actually find out who shot JFK, and the game doesn't play politics. But, it does reject the Warren Commission's "single bullet" theory. If your plan is to go back in time and simply kill Lee Harvey Oswald, for example, the assassination still occurs.

"I definitely believe there was more than one gunman," said Lennon. "Oswald may have been one of them, but he wasn't the only one."

Hot line: NEC (312-860-9500) has introduced "Intersect CDR-35," a portable CD-ROM reader. The unit weighs just 2.2 pounds and can play compact computer disks with any IBM compatible or Macintosh com-

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\$100-\$200

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that new computer? Can you rent your home office to your employer? Can you deduct your home office if you sleep in it? If you have an office at home or are thinking about starting one by the end of 1989, here are a few points to think about:

■ Your home office is only deductible if it is used exclusively for business. Don't put an exercise bicycle in the room, and don't use it as a second bedroom.

■ If you're self-employed, anything you purchase to assist you in your business is deductible. Save every receipt and keep a record of every dime coming in or going out. Not only will this be necessary in case of an audit, but it will also assure that you take every deduction you're entitled to.

■ It is hard to deduct the cost of computer equipment. If you use the computer 80 percent of the time for business and 20 percent of the time to play "Leather Goddesses From Phobos," you can only deduct 80 percent of your computing expenses.

■ If you work for a company, a computer must be "required as a condition of employment and for the convenience of the employer."